



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Environmental Affairs

100 Cambridge Street, Suite 900

Boston, MA 02114-2119

Mitt Romney
GOVERNOR

Kerry Healey
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Stephen R. Pritchard
SECRETARY

Tel: (617) 626-1000
Fax: (617) 626-1181
<http://www.mass.gov/envir>

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CONTACT:

Vanessa Gulati
617 626-1119

**STORROW DRIVE TUNNEL PROJECT
SUBJECT TO ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW**

***High Level of Scrutiny and Review Imposed
As Project Planning Gets Underway***

Secretary of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs, Stephen R. Pritchard, today announced the Storrow Drive Tunnel Reconstruction plan will be required to comply with the Massachusetts Environmental Policy Act (MEPA). The role of the state's MEPA process is to fully disclose information to both the public and decision-makers about the project, identify all viable alternatives to the project being proposed, and to identify and reduce potential environmental impacts to the maximum extent possible.

The state's Department of Conservation and Recreation (DCR) is set to initiate a public planning process to address the need for reconstruction of the tunnel that runs under Storrow Drive adjacent to Arlington and Berkeley Streets in downtown Boston. "MEPA review is an added layer of protection for the community," said Pritchard. Beyond the public outreach and involvement being planned by DCR, the MEPA review will require a higher level of scrutiny by the public and agencies at both the state and city level.

During the first round of public meetings occurring February 13 and 15, 2006 existing conditions, an overview of design options and public comments will be discussed. Following this meeting will be a second set of public meeting where a range of options will be presented, and the short and long term effects will be discussed. After getting the input of the public, neighborhood groups and organizations, and city and state elected officials; DCR will present all feasible design alternatives at another round of public meetings to be conducted in March.

After the round of meetings in March, DCR will file an Environmental Notification Form (ENF) with MEPA that will review the design alternatives presented in the second round of meetings for tunnel reconstruction. This filing will include statements for project proposals, will document the existing conditions of the Storrow Drive Tunnel and the surrounding areas, and will contain estimated construction duration, cost for these options and the temporary and long term impacts for these options. The ENF will include a review of feasible alternatives and will trigger the first of a series of mandatory public comment periods that will give all interested parties the opportunity to provide MEPA with their issues and concerns with each design alternative presented.

MEPA review will assist DCR in facilitating environmental planning as it proceeds with planning for the reconstruction of the Storrow Drive Tunnel. It will allow all impacted parties, especially the public, to fully consider the positive and negative, short-term and long-term potential environmental impacts for all phases of the project, and the cumulative impacts of the project and any other work or activity in the immediate surroundings and region. MEPA review can influence the planning and design of a project and allows for a thorough and transparent process with mandatory public review of all information and provides opportunity for public comment at each stage of MEPA review.

“The MEPA will complement what will be a comprehensive public participation process already being planned by DCR,” said Pritchard. “The project raises a lot of questions and MEPA will help structure the planning process and hopefully instill a level of public trust and confidence that the process will be thorough, fair and transparent,” according to Pritchard.

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The first round of public meetings discussing reconstruction plans for the Storrow Drive Tunnel will take place on February 13 from 6:30- 8:30 PM in Gardner Auditorium at the State House and February 15 from 6:30- 8:30 PM in the Auditorium at Shriners Hospital for Children on Blossom Street. Future public meeting dates will be announced later this month.